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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this paper is to describe the programs and outcomes of the efforts initiated by Tarleton State University (Texas) designed to support the public schools in their efforts to improve the teaching, learning, and quality of life in the public schools. The Tarleton Model for Accelerated Teacher Education is an accelerated teacher certification program which enables persons with a baccalaureate degree to earn a teaching certificate through a combination of university-based coursework and a paid internship under the joint sponsorship of collaborating school districts and the university. The Effective Schools Project is designed to assist public school districts with the implementation of effective schools practices. The Master Teacher Academy was implemented to help experienced teachers extend their skills to the level of a Master Teacher and to help rejuvenate the spirit of good teachers. The Trainer of Trainers Institute was developed to equip public school personnel with values and skills related to campus-based staff development. (IAH)

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TITLE OF PRESENTATION

**University/Public School Collaboration:
A Comprehensive Model for Staff Development and School Improvement**

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University/Public School Collaboration
A Comprehensive Model for Staff Development and School Improvement

During the decade of the 1980's school districts were assaulted with recommendations from every quarter dictating programs, curriculum and procedures designed to remediate the ills of public education. Schools were cast in a reactionary mode and were forced to comply to mandates emanating from every level, including the coffee house, the court house and the state house. In such an atmosphere teachers and administrators tended to become defensive and conservative in their actions. Even when the needs and interests of students dictated otherwise, schools were hesitant to enact new programs or innovative practices which might unnecessarily place them in the spotlight of public scrutiny.

Against this backdrop, Tarleton State University began offering programs to provide instructional and administrative support services and to meet the staffing needs and professional development requirements of area school districts. In 1986 an alternative teacher certification program was initiated in collaboration with schools in the Tarleton service area to meet the staffing needs of schools and to attract new talent into the teaching profession. An effective schools project was begun in 1988 to help school districts bring about structural and curricular changes related to the goals of school improvement and increased achievement. A summer academy for teachers was initiated in 1988 to hone the professional skills and rejuvenate the sagging spirits of experienced teachers. Finally, in 1990 an institute was established to train teachers and administrators in the methods and values related to campus-based staff development.

The common thread running through each of the above programs is the belief that genuine reform can be accomplished only with the full involvement and commitment of community members, teachers and administrators in the public schools. Change must be initiated by those who will implement the change. Politicians and business executives may have some generalized notion about how teaching and learning should occur, but the most knowledgeable experts can be found in communities, the classrooms and administrative offices of the public schools. The purpose of this paper is to describe the programs and outcomes of the efforts initiated by Tarleton State University designed to support the public schools in their efforts to

improve the teaching, the learning and the "quality of life" in the public schools.

Tarleton Model for Accelerated Teacher Education (TMATE)

The Tarleton Model for Accelerated Teacher Education (TMATE) program is an accelerated teacher certification program offered through the Department of Education and Psychology at Tarleton State University in Stephenville, Texas. Since 1986, TMATE has served primarily small, rural public school districts in a 22,000 square mile area of North Central Texas. The program enables persons with a baccalaureate degree to earn a teaching certificate through a combination of university-based course work, coupled with a paid internship under the joint sponsorship of collaborating school districts and the university.

Applicants to the TMATE program must possess a bachelor's degree from a regionally accredited institution of higher education, possess a grade point average of 2.75 on a 4.0 scale in the content area as well as on overall course work, achieve a passing score on the state-mandated test for entering a teacher education program, and make an acceptable score on the Graduate Record Examination. Program applicants must also possess a unique drive to become a teacher. TMATE applicants tend to be older and more mature than the traditional beginning teacher, and they are more willing to take the risks associated with innovative programs and practices. Before entering the classroom, the innovative drive of the intern is fostered by an intensive classroom study of teaching methods coupled with the practical application of these methods in a summer laboratory school.

The laboratory school, Summer Adventures In Learning (SAIL), is the capstone experience of the pre-internship course work. SAIL is a three week school in which the curriculum is designed and delivered by the prospective interns. SAIL utilizes the many talents and unique life experiences of the prospective interns, and prepares them for the new professional arena of the public school classroom. Although different from the real world, SAIL provides the opportunity for the prospective interns to work with both large and small groups of children. By design SAIL is oriented toward innovative teaching practices predicated on the concepts that learning is interesting, challenging, and is something that all children can do. SAIL is the

experiential base that introduces the prospective intern to teaching and in some regards is comparable to student teaching.

Before beginning an internship and gaining full admission to TMATE, the intern must locate a sponsoring school district. The school district must be willing to sponsor the intern and work with the university as a full partner in the year-long training process. The intern will fill a teaching position in the sponsoring school district and will have full authority and responsibility for teaching the subjects and the students to whom the intern is assigned. The internship remains, however, a training vehicle to provide for the professional development of the intern. A mentor teacher is assigned from the sponsoring district, and a university faculty member also provides supervision and support. The intern receives on-the-job training comparable to that which any other beginning teacher would receive under a fully developed induction program.

During the internship, the intern receives a great deal of guidance and direction from both the university and the public school. A university supervisor is assigned to the intern and conducts regular visits to the intern's classroom. During these visits, the supervisor conducts formal and informal evaluations of the intern's teaching performance. The supervisor also visits with the principal and mentor teacher to obtain information about the intern's performance so that relevant professional development experiences can be devised to meet the needs of the intern. A mentor teacher, assigned by the school, observes the intern on a monthly basis and coaches the intern in the development of professional skills. The intern likewise observes the mentor for the purpose of experiencing first-hand the application of teaching and classroom management methods. Additional professional development experiences are delivered through monthly seminars established by the TMATE director and held on the university campus. The seminars focus on the most pressing needs of the interns and encourage sharing among the interns.

Formal evaluation of the teaching performance of interns is conducted in the same manner as the appraisal of all other teachers During the school year, each intern receives four formal evaluations by two instructional appraisers. The format of the appraisal process is derived from the lesson cycle and effective teaching practices. Extensive instruction is provided for the interns on developing teaching methods consistent with these concepts of

teaching. Appraisal results provide the substance for professional growth goals of the intern during the remainder of the internship.

Effective Schools Project (ESP)

In 1988 Tarleton State University initiated a project designed to assist public school districts with the implementation of effective school practices. Entitled the Effective Schools Project (ESP), a collaborative effort ensued. Based, in part, on the assumptions that all schools can improve and that educators can assist each other in their efforts to improve, Tarleton State University and 24 public school campuses around the state began to combine resources to form what is now affectionately referred to as ESP.

Prior to participation in the project, each campus must make a commitment to address the ESP objectives. The objectives of ESP, although lofty, are simply stated and attainable by each participating school. From the outset, participating schools develop instructional leadership teams composed of the building principal and classroom teachers or support personnel. The teams meet regularly with Tarleton mentors to explore the correlates of effective schools and to ultimately develop school improvement plans. ESP emphasizes the importance of shared decision-making and the acceptance of responsibility for the educational outcomes of a school. Through campus-based school management, teachers, administrators, students, parents, and resource persons outside the district work together toward the attainment of identified goals. The building principal is the individual with primary responsibility for articulating instructional goals, and insuring that all members of the educational community are involved in planning and implementing strategies for achieving the goals.

From the identified goals, each school develops a campus improvement plan which becomes a working document serving not only as the standard for school improvement but also satisfying state mandated planning requirements. Action teams or task forces are frequently formed to implement strategies for school improvement. The result of persons working together toward school improvement is that the sum is greater than the total of the parts. ESP recognizes that true, long-lasting school improvement occurs from the inside-out and side-by-side. Therefore, schools

focus on developing coaching and mentoring programs to promote individual professional growth.

To "head off" many of the deleterious effects of the implementation of noted school reforms, ESP also addresses the intangible character of the school climate. By accentuating the positive facets of schools, ESP endeavors to instill a climate of success conducive to a climate of change. The effective schools correlates serve as a point of reference for all ESP programs. ESP seminars, in-service, and field service are predicated on the correlates of effective schools.

By committing to the project, each campus is required to appoint a campus leadership team, attend seminars on the Tarleton campus, conduct monthly school improvement meetings, provide a statement of assurance to support the project, assist in the collection of data for project evaluation, and to make a long-term commitment to school improvement. Monthly ESP seminars feature nationally known authorities such as Dr. Carl Glickman from the University of Georgia; Dr. Henry Levin from Stanford University; Dr. Jim Curry from the University of Maine; and Dr. Michael Strembitsky, Superintendent of Schools in Edmonton, Alberta. Each speaker brings his or her own experiences and theories to the project, and each provides an opportunity to communicate with campus teams regarding strategies for implementing programs on home campuses.

Throughout the year, ESP provides various in-service opportunities to participating campus leadership teams and teachers. The in-service activities (of which most are approved for Advanced Academic Training credit) include math, science, and writing workshops, the highly regarded Master Teacher Academy, peer coaching and mentoring, and the nationally recognized Instructional Leadership Conference.

Several participating schools are now involved in networking, in which they observe first hand the various implementation techniques employed by other campuses. A networking system has developed through these visits and the various workshops held for participating school campuses. To further facilitate networking, a newsletter is periodically distributed to ESP campuses.

Various Tarleton State University faculty serve as ESP mentors to participating schools. Mentors visit members of the leadership team on their home campus, and they lend support in explaining the ESP concept to the

remainder of the faculty. The on-campus visits provide support for the instructional leadership teams, and assist with the implementation of strategies to reach goals established by the schools.

A final component of the program is assessment. As a result of various means of evaluation, it has been determined that ESP has successfully assisted the vast majority of the campuses in reaching goals. In fact, statistical research conducted on teachers in the participating schools produced some very interesting and exciting results. The study ascertained teacher opinions of various aspects of the campus. And, after a pre- and post-test, it was revealed that there was an increase in regular involvement of faculty in the selection of topics for in-service programs, there was increased agreement that class visitations by supervisors contributed to the improvement in the quality of instruction, there was a perceived increase in the amount of freedom which teachers were allowed in the selection of teaching methods, there was a stronger agreement that the schools' priorities for expenditures of funds were appropriate, there were more positive attitudes toward the organization and administration of the school, and there were more positive attitudes toward the overall instructional program of the school.

Aside from the statistical measures that indicate the effectiveness of ESP, there are some obvious signs of effectiveness, namely a tremendous growth in the number of schools participating in the program. Initially, the Effective Schools Project was comprised of Tarleton State University and 24 public school campuses. In four years of operation, it has grown to include 70 campuses, and at one point covered over 107,000 square miles.

To assist as many campuses as possible, and still maintain a high quality program, the Tarleton ESP team has developed a two-tiered approach. This approach is designed to address the more immediate needs of participating schools new to the project, and to guide the more experienced schools in the direction the school desires. Schools new to the project, called Cycle I schools, receive more direct intervention from university mentors. Greater emphasis is placed on planning and goal setting, and team building is encouraged. Schools that have at least one year with the project, Cycle II schools, no longer need mentors, but team building and goal setting is still encouraged. Cycle II schools also participate in the Trainer of Trainers network and campus seminars.

Since no two schools are alike, ESP does not prescribe a formula for the implementation of effective strategies. Nor does ESP provide a "recipe" for success. Instead, the ESP model is based on a "menu" approach to school improvement. Schools are provided with various programs, topics, and ideas. From this "menu" schools are encouraged to select and adapt only those programs, topics, and ideas that meet the needs of particular schools.

There is enough data to suggest that governments cannot legislate effective schools. Therefore, Tarleton State University and public school districts in Texas are working together through the Effective Schools Project to promote long-lasting school improvement from the inside-out and side-by-side.

Master Teacher Academy

Teachers, perhaps, have suffered more than any other of the education professionals from the charges of malpractice and incompetence which have been leveled at the education community. Rather than being viewed as the means by which education might be reformed, classroom teachers have been singled out by the critics as the cause of most deficiencies in American education. The Master Teacher Academy was implemented in 1988 to help experienced teachers extend their skills to the level of a "Master Teacher" and to help rejuvenate the spirit of good teachers who had been worn down by the constant stream of criticism in the decade of the 1980's.

School personnel were invited to nominate exemplary teachers from their districts to attend the two-week academy at the nominal cost of $100. Selected individuals completed a two week intensive professional development program designed to extend their skills in the areas commonly associated with a master teacher. Texas has adopted a teacher appraisal system derived from the direct-teach model of teaching and learning, and the net effect of the system has been that of narrowing the range of teaching strategies employed by teachers in the classroom.

The Master Teacher Academy attempts to counter the prevailing belief that a single teaching strategy is sufficient to meet the learning needs of a diverse student population. MTA participants are introduced to a wide range of teaching and learning strategies including cooperative learning, concept formation, synectics, problem solving and the teams-games-tournaments

society, a drastic need exists to invest heavily in staff development. School personnel who received their initial professional training in an earlier era readily admit to their inadequacies in meeting the learning needs of youngsters currently populating the public schools. The recent philosophical shift to site-based decision making also presents challenges to school personnel which they are not prepared to answer.

In response to the changes and challenges mentioned above, Tarleton State University developed a Trainer of Trainers Institute to prepare public school personnel with the values and skills related to campus-based staff development. Texas schools are now required to develop annual school improvement plans, and a logical extension of these plans is a campus-based staff development program designed to facilitate the accomplishment of goals related to local school improvement.

Participants in the Trainer of Trainers Institute are introduced to the advantages and rationale of campus-based staff development. Rather than being viewed as a disembodied event arranged to meet state mandates. staff development is conceptualized as a means for individual campuses to focus time and resources toward the achievement of school improvement goals. Staff development becomes the means by which individual faculties achieve a unity of purpose and mission.

Participants in the Trainer of Trainer Institute are introduced to the principles of adult learning theory, and they are stimulated to apply the theory toward the development and implementation of campus-based staff development activities. Adult cooperative learning strategies such as Jig-Saw and Interview Design are presented to participants as viable mean of involving a large percentage of the faculty in staff development designed to facilitate the achievement of school improvement goals generated at the campus level.

Evaluations of the initial Institute were very positive. For the first time, teachers and administrators began to view staff development as an integral part of their efforts to improve student performance or enhance the teaching and learning environment of the school. The emerging paradigm of staff development provided a stark contrast to the previous model where the "outside expert" was brought in to inform teachers and administrators about how to comply with the latest state mandate.

method. In addition, the participants learn the process of peer coaching so that when innovations are attempted on their home campus, they will have a ready-made support system to support the change process.

Evaluations of the Master Teacher Academy have been extremely positive. The emotions expressed by teachers at the end of the academy are reminiscent of those experienced by converts at a Southern Baptist revival. The following quotations were derived from the written responses of MTA graduates, and they provide a better measure of the effectiveness of the academy than the numerical ratings to objective questions:

> I came in close to burn-out, was "re-born" and am anticipating the next school year with lots of new ideas to implement.
>
> . . . gives inspiration, direction, support, and kindles a fire in teachers who have given their all in their classroom and to their students.
>
> . . . a look into the future: a future that includes sharing, growing, and a positive outlook for education.
>
> . . . an excellent massage for the poor, battered teacher who needs a shot of adrenaline and whose morale and battery need to be recharged.
>
> . . . gave me a world of ideas, a lifeline of friends and resource people, and a time of rededication to the evolving and challenging field of teaching.

Campus-Based Staff Development: A Trainer of Trainers Workshop

The most recent addition to the Tarleton State University menu of services was an institute to train personnel in the skills and values related to campus-based staff development. The accomplishment of site-based management and other educational reforms will be accomplished by the personnel currently employed in the public school system. Because of the changes in the nature of the learners, the American home and the American

Conclusion

For significant reforms to be accomplished in the education of youngsters, a fusion must be accomplished between the research arm, the training arm and the practicing arm of the teaching profession. In the past, each of these entities has existed in isolation from the others and each has tended to disparage the endeavors of others. Universities, public schools, administrators and teachers must unite in their efforts to improve the conditions of teaching and learning for all members of the education community. Only then will the slogan, "All children can learn", become a reality.